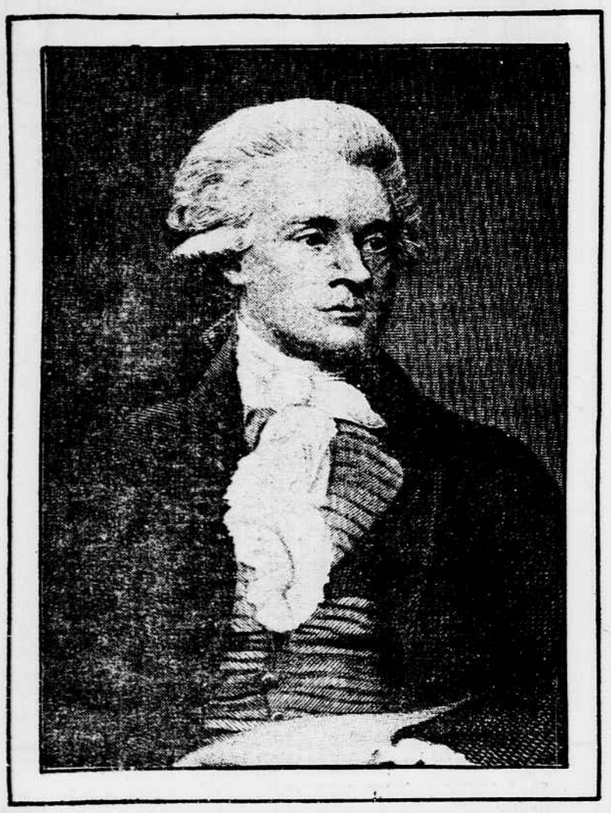
How British Punished Signers of the Declaration

Nearly All Wealthy, Patriots Who Signed Famous Document of Independence Were Merchants, Importers, Planters and Professional Men — Not an Ignorant Man or a Failure Among the Fifty-Six Who Wrote Their Names — The Type of Americans Who Took Step "With Halters Around Their Necks"—How Lee Was Saved by His Servants — The Secret Sessions of Congress—Persecution of the Signers and Penalties Visited Upon the Leaders Who Made the Declaration Possible and Gave It Form and Substance—Every Signer Suffered.



THOMAS JEFFERSON,
Writer of the Declaration.

THE thirty-ninth man was Charles Carroll of Maryland. He was lean and undersized.

It was the 2d day of August, 1776. The Declaration of Independence, having been ceremoniously copied on parchment, lay upon the desk of the secretary of Congress.

"Will you sign it?" John Hancock asked.

"Most willingly," Carroll answered.

"There goes a few millions," a bystander said, millions meaning specie, lands, live stock and other property, as the scratching of the quill was heard on the document, still existent, by which a new nation took its uncertain place in the world.

Five years before, Samuel Chase, also of Maryland, exclaimed to Carroll, in his robust style: "We have the better of our opponents; we have completely written them down."

"Do you think that writing will settle the question between us?" Carroll asked.

"To be sure; what else can we resort to?" Chase replied.

"The bayonet," Carroll answered.

Chase, the son of a learned and famous clergyman, was thirty years old. "The bayonet," turned his thoughts from essays and pamphlets to the sword. It was not long before the mayor and aldermen of Annapolis described him in scorn as "a busy, restless incendiary, a ringleader of mobs, a foulmouthed and inflaming son of discord and faction, a common disturber of the public tranquility and a promoter of the lawless excesses of the multitude."

Lovers of liberty called him the "Demosthenes of Maryland" when they heard him cry out: "By the God of Heaven, I owe no allegiance to the King of Great Britain." Chase's name is the third one above Carroll's on the Declaration of Independence. And so the day of the bayonet had dawned. At the close of the war, President Washington made Samuel Chase an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

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Men of standing and of property, men with much to lose, brought on the revolution. The rebels were not the rabble of the thirteen colonies. Washington, Jefferson and Carroll were rich. They lived in mansions and their furniture and clothing were bought in Europe. Carroll, a Roman Catholic, had been educated in Great Britain and France.

The same type of men in the north wrote their names on the Declaration; wrote, as George Read of Delaware remarked, "with a halter around their necks." Wealthy William Ellery, the Rhode Island lawyer, "determined to see how they all looked, as they signed what might be their death warrant," stood beside Charles Thomson, secretary of Congress, and "eyed each closely as he affixed his name to the document. Undaunted resolution," so runs his record of that great occasion, "was displayed in every countenance."

It was William Ellery who, during all the disasters of the bitter days that followed, concluded every speech he made to the starving colonists by saying: "The Lord reigneth"; words caught up nearly a century later by James A. Garfield, on the balcony of the customhouse in New York, when, facing a mighty throng of maddened men bent on avenging Lincoln's death, he said: "God reigns and the government at Washington still lives."

The Philadelphia newspapers on July 3, 1776, merely announced that on "yesterday the Continental Congress declared the United Colonies free and independent states." Only those twelve words and no more. It was not until two days later, however, that the Declaration, amended and blue-penciled, was agreed to and signed by John Hancock, President of Congress. His was the only name then given out. This man, a Boston merchant, rode in a carriage drawn by six bay horses and dressed in cloth embroidered with gold and silver.

On the day that Robert Morris signed he was the wealthiest and greatest merchant in Philadelphia. He purchased goods in England and sold them here at a large profit. His ships were on the ocean. He had a hothouse and an icehouse, the first in America. No price he might have asked would have gone unaccepted or unpaid by the British government.

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The colonies had nothing to offer but liberty. And when Washington's soldiers, as the struggle went on, needed clothing, shoes, guns and ammunition, Robert Morris personally advanced $1,400,000 to a nation that was debt-ridden and empty of ready assets except the courage and the patriotism of its inhabitants.

In the same city of Philadelphia was wise, frugal, industrious and opulent Benjamin Franklin, the editor and publisher, whose fortune and whose life went into jeopardy at his signature. He was seventy years old when he put his name among the other fifty-five rebels and invited poverty and a felon's death. "We must be unanimous," John Hancock urged; "we must all hang together."

"Yes," Franklin answered, pen in hand, "or most assuredly we shall hang separately."

Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, but John Adams passed it through Congress. He was its floor leader, the manager who sent Samuel Chase to Maryland and Dr. Rush through Pennsylvania for the purpose of creating public sentiment.

"See," Chase wrote back to Philadelphia, "the glorious effect of country instruction. The people have fire, it is not smothered." Jefferson himself acknowledged that Adams was "the ablest advocate and defender" of the Declaration "against the multifarious assaults it encountered."

"I knew him well," Jefferson wrote of Adams, "and I repeat that a man more perfectly honest never issued from the hands of his Creator."

Adams was forty-one years old at the time the Declaration was adopted by Congress. He was saving a competence from his earnings as a lawyer and was writing Abigail, his remarkable wife, to be economical for the sake of their children and themselves. A man of established position and great promise, with a fortune growing under his hand, he was no less an enemy of England than was Samuel, the other Massachusetts Adams, "the poor gentleman," as he was known at home and among his colleagues in Congress.

The Lees, likewise, were rich—Francis Lightfoot and Richard Henry—the former almost idly so, with a great landed estate, worked by slaves. But he signed. The resolution leading to the Declaration was written by Richard Henry as early as Friday, June 7.

"These united colonies," so the resolution read, "are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states.

"Therefore, they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown and all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."

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The practice of legislative bodies would have made Lee, by right of authorship, chairman of the committee that was to prepare the formal Declaration of Independence. Lee, however, was called to his home in Virginia by the illness of a member of his family, and Thomas Jefferson, who properly can be called the writer of the revolution, had the honor of composing one of the greatest state papers ever written since Moses brought forth from the mountain his tables of stone.

A British captain of marines, at the head of a company of men, broke into Lee's house during the night. Lee was to be arrested as a traitor to the king, and imprisoned, if not hanged. He was saved, however, by the intelligence of his negro servants, who told the British captain that their master had returned to his duties in Philadelphia.

The sessions of the Congress had been held in secret. No reports of the debates were ever made. Hancock's, for nearly a month, was the only name officially made known to the public. But the British were aware of the fact that Richard Henry Lee had written the resolution declaring "these united colonies are, and of right, ought to be free and independent states."

The persecution of the signers, though they did not sign until August 2, began at once. The penalties visited upon the leaders who made the Declaration of Independence possible, and who gave it form and substance, were no greater than were those inflicted upon every member of Congress.

The thirteen children of "Honest John Hart" fled from their home in New Jersey to escape a troop of Hessians. Their mother was too ill to be moved and soon died, but happily in her own house. John Hart, an old man, hunted in woods and hills, never stayed twice in the same place at night, and once slept in a kennel with a dog. His large farm was pillaged and his live stock driven away.

A British army was encamped near his estate and a British sloop was at anchor a short distance from his house when Lewis Morris of New York, a wealthy man and a graduate of Yale, wrote his name on the parchment among the rest. His forest of more than a thousand acres was cut down or burned, his mansion was ruined and his family had to flee for their lives.

The Livingstons—Philip, his wife and children—colonial aristocrats, went into hiding. William Floyd hurriedly sent his family to Connecticut. His mansion on Long Island was occupied by a troop of cavalry and his horses, cows, sheep and swine were confiscated. This man lost all use of his landed estate for seven years.

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In the south, Thomas Heyward, who had been educated in England and had traveled in Europe, suffered in his person and property. He was wounded and imprisoned and 130 of his slaves were taken along by the British. Arthur Middleton, a graduate from one of the colleges at Cambridge, a cultivated and much traveled man, was made a prisoner. The furniture in his house was destroyed and the paintings on his walls, purchased in Europe, were cut to pieces.

And there was Richard Stockton of New Jersey, a Princeton graduate and lawyer. He was arrested, thrown in jail, deprived of food and so brutally treated that he never recovered his health. His papers and library were burned and his farm laid in ruins. Indeed, he was so much impoverished that he had to borrow money with which to buy bread. Dying, he begged his children to remember that "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom."

The only Welshman among the signers was Francis Lewis. His signature cost him the whole of his rich estate. An alien by birth and an importer, he was as ardent for liberty as was the poorest native American in the list. Learning business in a London counting house, he emigrated to this country, bringing along with him a quantity of goods, which he sold in New York and Philadelphia. He became a great merchant and a ship owner and startled Europe and America by sending a cargo of wheat to Liverpool. His personal interests were in Great Britain, but he joined the revolutionists, saw his country home on Long Island plundered and wrecked and his business swept away.

Every signer suffered. Most of them, it should be remembered, were men of property. Many of them belonged to what in these days would be called the plutocracy. Twenty-seven of them were graduates from European or American colleges. There was not an ignorant man among them.

Twenty-five had traveled in Europe. Twenty-four were lawyers in good practice. Thirteen were wealthy farmers. Nine were merchants. Five were physicians, one of whom was the great Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia, "who esteemed," as a cotemporary of his had said, "the poor his best patients, for God was their paymaster."

Nor were the signers emotional youths bent on war and adventure. Their average age was forty-three years and ten months. "And every one died," some one has truly said, "without a stain upon his honor or his character." All but eight of the fifty-six were born in America. Two were natives of England, two of Scotland, three of Ireland and one of Wales.

The men of wealth, in addition to those who have been mentioned, included Thomas Nelson of Virginia. He lived in fine style, hunted foxes in season with his pack of hounds and rode daily to his plantation, a black man accompanying him with a fowling piece. He gave all of his property to the cause of liberty and left his wife in poverty.

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Another Virginian, Carter Braxton, owned four large farms. His crops were corn and tobacco. Ships, sailing from the wharf near Mount Vernon, the home of Washington, took his tobacco to England and brought back books, plate, wines, clothing and furniture. Nevertheless he signed. Still another Virginian was Benjamin Harrison, who inherited three fortunes and owned lands, mills, vessels and a shipyard.

Joseph Hewes of North Carolina was a very prosperous importer. The revolution drove him out of business. William Paca's estates in Maryland were near the British lines and exposed to instant reprisals. George Wythe of the same colony was rich and had been luxurious and indolent. At the age of thirty he changed the manner of his life and at fifty, when he signed, was a famous lawyer. Two young men who studied in his office became Presidents of the United States and another became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Old Caesar Rodney of Delaware, proprietor of rich and broad acres, who was afflicted with cancer in his face from his youth up, though he wore a silk mask over his eye and cheek, was one of the most active and cheerful figures of the revolution. George Taylor, too, was rich. He married a widow in Pennsylvania, once the wife of the man for whom he worked as a day laborer, and the venture brought him a large iron works and a mansion.

In Pennsylvania also lived George Clymer, wealthy, dominating and courageous. His house was sacked. A man of bold opinions, he said that a "representative of the people is appointed to think for and not with his constituents." Answering an Englishman, after the war, who sneeringly referred to Americans as being "but imperfectly civilized," George Clymer replied that American fathers did not, "as is said of a mouse with a litter, starve nine of their children to overfeed the tenth." Nor were American laws "so framed as that the poor people are necessarily confined to the same district, as deer to the same park."

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There were great men, as well as rich ones, in the resolute ranks of the signers. Pointing to Roger Sherman, the Connecticut shoemaker, jurist, legislator and the father of nineteen children, Thomas Jefferson said: "There is a man who never said a foolish thing in his life."

"Popular opinion," Sherman wrote, "is founded in justice, and the only way to know if popular opinion is in favor of a measure is to examine whether it is just and right in itself." Sherman fled through the fields at night followed by the British.

"We are not ripe for a declaration of independence," a conservative man said, during one of the sessions of the Congress that soon after passed Richard Henry Lee's momentous resolution.

"In my judgment, sir," exclaimed a six-footer at his side, "we are not only ripe but rotting."

And at that, the speaker, John Witherspoon, president of Princeton, had only been in this country for eight years. His farm also was plundered and ruined. He lived through his losses and dangers, however, and at seventy, wedded a young lady of twenty-three. The other Scotchman who signed was James Wilson, a wealthy Philadelphian and the leader of the Pennsylvania bar—tall, big-voiced and near-sighted, the small lenses of whose spectacles were set in a huge silver frame.

"Yesterday," John Adams ("our Colossus of the floor," Jefferson called him) wrote, on the 5th of July to Abigail his wonderful wife, "the greatest question was decided that was ever debated in America; and greater, perhaps, never was or will be decided among men.

"It ought to be solemnized," he added, "with pomps, shows, games, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations from one end of the continent to the other, from this time forward forever."

Too weak to lift his head from the pillow, dying at the age of ninety, John Adams was asked on the Fourth of July, 1826, for a sentiment. "Independence forever," he said, and those were his last words.

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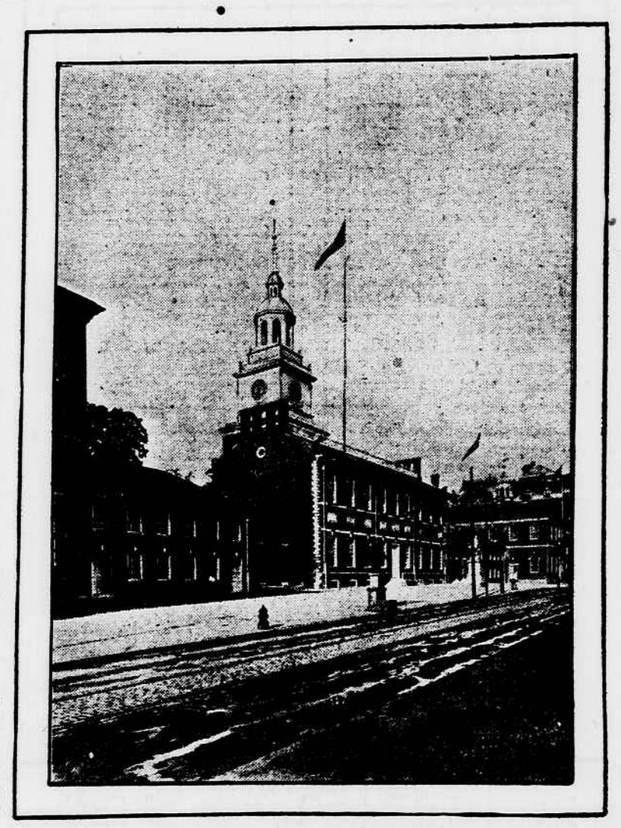
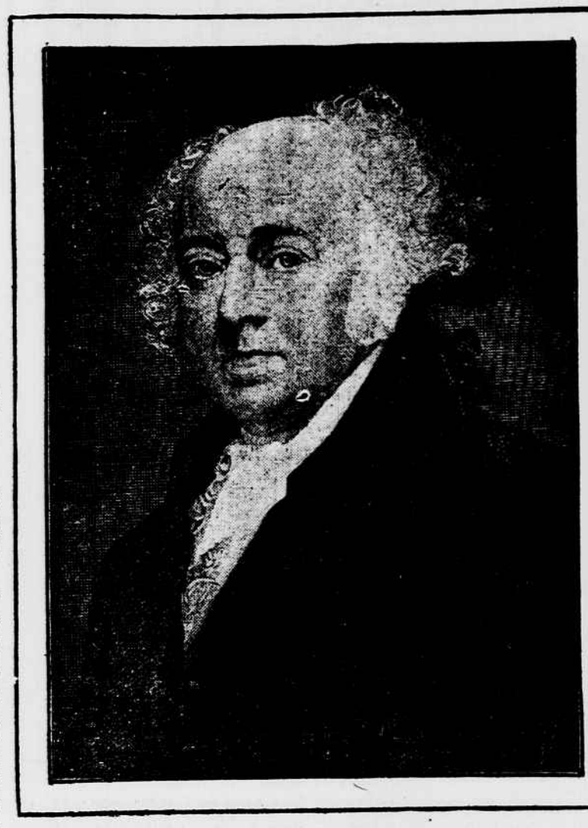
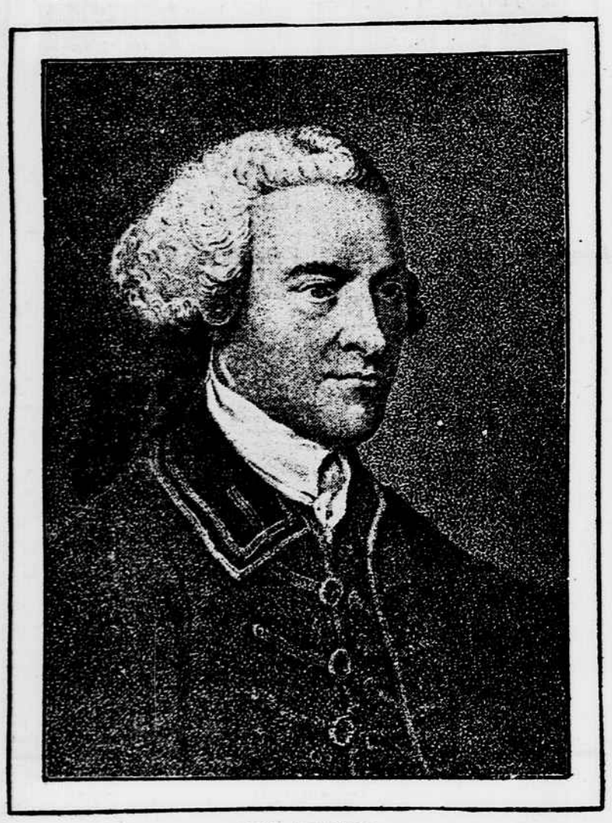


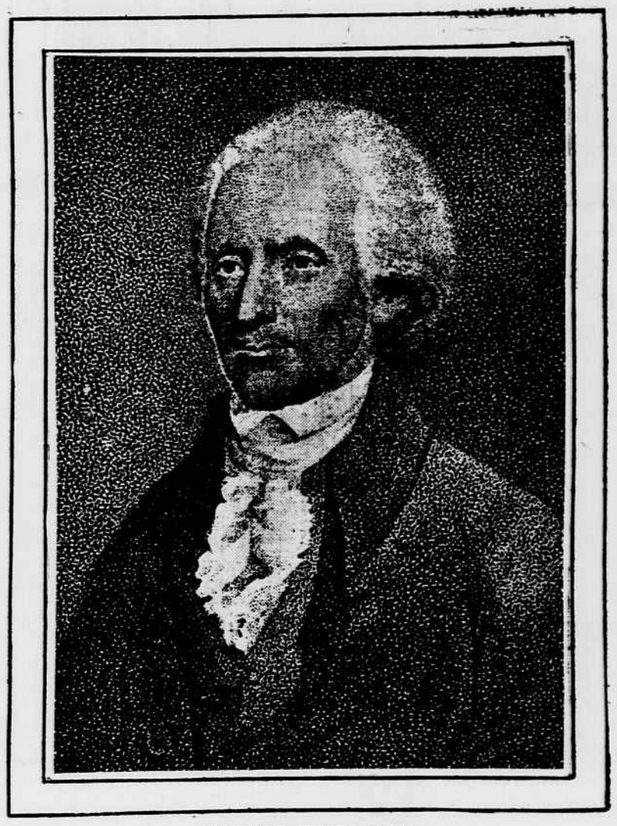
INDEPENDENCE HALL.



JOHN ADAMS,
Who maneuvered the Liberty Resolution through Congress.



JOHN HANCOCK,
The first signer.



RICHARD HENRY LEE,
Author of the Liberty Resolution.

Lincoln Conspirators Were Executed Fifty Years Ago Next Wednesday

NEXT Wednesday is the fiftieth anniversary of the execution of those accused of complicity in the murder of President Lincoln. The sentence imposed by the military court was carried out July 7, 1865, at the old penitentiary in the arsenal grounds. The four principals—Payne, Herold, Atzerodt and Mrs. Surratt—were buried there, immediately after the execution, but in 1869, after permission was granted by President Andrew Johnson for their removal, the relatives of the unfortunates had their remains interred in the different private burying grounds of the city.

When the prisoners were first taken into custody they were confined on one of the monitors at the navy yard, but shortly before the trial began they were put under the command of Gen. Hancock, who ordered their removal to the third floor of the old penitentiary, in the arsenal grounds. This building, which was erected in 1836, had been used as a prison before the war, but at the beginning of that great struggle it was abandoned and the inmates removed to Albany, N. Y.

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In order to have the trial take place on the floor where the prisoners were confined, a trial room was prepared for the occasion. It was small and poorly ventilated, with only four windows, covered with thick iron gratings. The room was whitewashed, new chairs and tables were put in and a prisoners' dock built along the western end. This had a strong railing in front, which separated the prisoners from the others in the room, and at the southern end of the wall was the door leading to the corridor in which were the cells of the accused.

May 1, President Johnson, acting on the advice of his Attorney General, ordered that a military commission of nine competent officers be detailed for the trial and that Judge Joseph E. Holt conduct it in person. Various preliminaries were gone through during the first few days and it was not until the morning of May 12 that the actual taking of testimony began.

The prisoners were each confined in a separate cell and all except Mrs. Surratt wore the rough canvas sacks over their heads. These had slits for breathing and eating, but prevented the wearers from seeing. Besides this, they were handcuffed and shackled, and Payne and Atzerodt had further weight of ball and chain attached to them. As they entered the courtroom the hoods were removed and each prisoner was separated from his fellow by a soldier.

All four pleaded "not guilty" and each made a motion for a separate trial, but in each case this request was denied. Payne and Atzerodt were legally represented by William E. Doster, Herold by Frederick Stone and Mrs. Surratt by Hon. Reverdy Johnson, one of Maryland's most prominent statesmen, who volunteered his services in her behalf after he had seen and talked with her and become convinced of her innocence in the plot to kill.

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Eloquent appeals were made for all the prisoners, but little could be said for the three men to convince the jury of their innocence. Herold had been the companion of Booth from the night of the assassination until his capture, and Payne and Atzerodt, on account of their attacks on state officials the night of April 14th, were believed to have been implicated in the plot.

The guilt of the woman was doubtful in the minds of many, but when the sentence of death was passed her name was included. This took place July 6, and the following day was fixed as a time for carrying out the sentence of the court.

Five of the jurors who condemned the prisoners petitioned clemency for Mrs. Surratt on account of her age, sex and previous character and reputation. This petition was taken by Judge Holt to President Johnson, but the exact truth as to just what took place in this regard will remain a controversy. Judge Holt claimed to have presented it, while the President avowed he had never seen the plea for clemency.

The daughter of the unfortunate woman tried in vain to obtain some reprieve, but the doors of the state's officials were closed against her. Nothing remained to the prisoners but preparation for the dreadful fate that awaited them. Spiritual consolation was given to all by representatives of the various creeds that they professed.

Payne was a son of a Baptist clergyman, and Dr. Gillette, a minister of that faith, attended him. Dr. Butler, a Lutheran pastor of Washington, offered what comfort he could to Atzerodt, the carriage painter. An Episcopal clergyman attended Herold, and Fathers Wiget and Walter prepared Mrs. Surratt for her end.

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The circumstances surrounding the execution of these last two were particularly pathetic on account of the presence of near relatives and friends. Both had lived in Washington, and Herold was the only boy of a family that had seven daughters. They, with the daughter of Mrs. Surratt, grieved so piteously that the guards, although accustomed to similar scenes, were unable to bear the sight.

The 7th of July was a day of intense heat. The scaffold on which the prisoners were to die had been erected in the arsenal grounds. Crowds of the curious had gathered from all points within a hundred miles of the city to witness the execution. But admission was denied to all, and, although some remained outside the walls, no view could be obtained of what went on within. None but the soldiers, relatives and spiritual advisers of the condemned were allowed within the precincts of the prison.

After 1 o'clock the death march began, with Mrs. Surratt first, Payne, Herold and Atzerodt following. All were seated while the death warrant was read. The sun's rays beat fiercely, and a soldier standing nearby held an umbrella over Mrs. Surratt to keep off the intense heat. She seemed only half conscious of what went on and bent her energy on the final prayers that her religious attendants kept up until the end.

Payne was the only indifferent one. All through the trial he had remained unobservant and unconcerned and many doubts were felt as to his sanity. Now on the scaffold he showed the first signs of feeling, and during the prayers of his own minister the tears gathered in his eyes. He felt compassion, too, for Mrs. Surratt and declared finally that she was innocent.

At the signal of Gen. Hartranft the prisoners took their places on the drops and in a few moments four bodies were lowered into newly made graves beneath the prison sod.

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In 1869, just before President Johnson left office, he granted permission to the prisoner's relatives for the removal of the bodies. Herold's remains are now in Congressional cemetery not far from the Southeast bridge over which Booth passed before he joined the youth in his endeavor to escape. There is no stone or mark to reveal his resting place to those who pass it by. Atzerodt lies in Glenwood, while Payne was buried at Holmead, an old cemetery of West Washington years ago. After that burial ground was discontinued the whereabouts of Payne's body were lost track of and now remain a mystery.

Mrs. Surratt's grave is in Mount Olivet, and a simple headstone put over her remains by the sexton then in charge of the cemetery attracts the attention of those who pass the roadway. The little piece of granite says only "Mrs. Surratt." There is no mention of her birth nor the why or when of her death. Nothing but the name alone will cause a visitor to pause in silent contemplation over the final resting place of her whose fate has and ever will remain a matter of debate.

Booth's body was taken to Baltimore during the same year, where it now lies in the family plot in Greenmount cemetery. While the trial and execution of those accused of conspiring with him in his plot against the nation's head were being conducted at the arsenal, his remains were resting there beneath the bricks in the cellar floor.

The great Edwin awaited the identification of his brother's body, which was satisfactorily made by Booth's dentist and then it was placed in a handsome casket and sent to Baltimore. The next day it was placed beneath thick ivy under the face of the monument erected in 1858 to the memory of the father, Junius Brutus Booth.

SIMPLE HEADSTONE OVER THE GRAVE OF MRS. SURRATT

Labyrinth of War News Recalls Fairy Tales.

AT one point on the battle line in France there is an intricate system of trenches which the French have named "The Labyrinth." The word frequently appears in the news from the awr and it is a word the meaning and significance of which many readers, especially adult readers, only vaguely understand. It is probably fuller of meaning to the average boy and girl than to the average man and woman, because the children are closer to the stories in which the labyrinth of classic lore most famously figures.

The word "labyrinth" brings back to memory one of the heroic achievements of Theseus, that great and fearless son of Aithra, a princess of Troezene, who was the fair, and beautiful, of course, daughter of Pittheus, the king.

Theseus had established his fame as a slayer of monsters, defender of the weak and avenger of many, many wrongs. He had overcome and killed Periphetes, Sinis and Sciron and others of that terrible company. His adventures had been many and bloody, and at last he had come to Crete "and to Cnossus beneath the peaks of Ida, and to the palace of Minos, the great king to whom Zeas himself taught laws."

The business that brought Thesus to Crete was to meet the dreaded and hated Minotaur, to whom Minos had annually thrown twenty of the youths of Athens in revenge for some old murder done by Aegeus, King of Athens. This Minotaur had the body of a man, "but his head was the head of a bull and his teeth were the teeth of a lion, and with them he tore his prey." The Minotaur lived in the labyrinth and in the words of Charles Kingsley, who loved the old Greek fairy tales, "Theseus went down into the doleful gulf through winding paths among the rocks, under caverns, and arches and galleries and over heaps of fallen stones, and he turned on the left hand and on the right hand and went up and down till his head was dizzy."

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Minos had a daughter, Ariadne. She was beautiful, as all kings' daughters must be. And just like girls today, her heart was in the right place and she could fall in love at sight. And she loved Theseus.

She came at night, notwithstanding it was an indiscretion, to the prison in which Minos' guards had locked young Theseus up. She had learned that he was to be fed to the Minotaur in the labyrinth. She pleaded with the youth, saying, according to report, "Flee down to your ship at once, for I bribed the guards before the door. Flee, you and all your friends, and go back in peace to Greece and take me, take me with you, for I dare not stay after you are gone! My father will kill me miserably if he knows what I have done."

But Theseus could not be dissuaded from his desire to have a run-in with the Minotaur. He insisted on mixing it up with the monster. So Ariadne gave Theseus a sword, and a little bundle of thread, called a "clue of thread," which he was to unwind as he went into and along the labyrinth, and by following backward along this "clue" he could find his way out of the labyrinth.

Brave and mighty Theseus made quick work in dispatching the Minotaur and by the aid of the "clue" he found his way out of the labyrinth. With his loved and loving Ariadne he escaped. But other troubles came upon Theseus in other lands, and he fell because he came to be too full of pride.

Gassing.

EX-PRESIDENT TAFT was talking at the Union League in Philadelphia about the German gas attacks.

"Thanks to steam," he said, "the sailor no longer has to wait for a favorable wind. It's the soldier who must do so now."